



TENNESSEE
AGRICULTURAL
STATISTICS
SERVICE

P.O. Box 41505
Nashville, TN 37204-1505
1-800-626-0987

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/tn>

cooperating with
Tennessee Department
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Gene Danekas
State Statistician

nass-tn@nass.usda.gov

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TENNESSEE CROP YIELDS COMING INTO FOCUS

Throughout the month of September, producers across the Volunteer State have been busy harvesting the State's row crops. As of October 1, nearly all of the corn and tobacco acreage had been harvested, while 17 percent of the soybeans and 42 percent of the cotton had been completed. With harvest complete or currently underway, producers have a much better handle on this year's crop yields. Gene Danekas, State Statistician for Tennessee, noted that based on an October 1 yield survey conducted by his office, most producers have found no big surprises once in their fields. "Producers had been anticipating highly variable yields this year, mainly due to their location within the State and at what times they received rain. There have been some very good yields reported, as well as some poor ones, but overall we did not see much change from our earlier forecast," said Danekas. Survey results show that the State's **corn** yield is forecast at 109 bushels per acre, 7 bushels above last year and the highest yield in the State since 1996. Farmers report that the crop was slightly better than expected, with some extremely good yields reported. It was also a good year for the State's tobacco growers. **Burley tobacco** is currently forecast at 2,100 pounds per acre, unchanged from the previous forecast, and the highest yield in the State since 1994. Producers are now busy preparing the crop for market. With a large amount of acreage left to be harvested, uncertainty continues to surround both the cotton and soybean crops. Rains near the end of September led to some harvesting problems, but **cotton** growers stayed with their earlier yield forecast of 565 pounds per acre. If realized, this will result in a total production of 700,000 bales, the highest amount in the State since 1995. The same rains, which caused delays in cotton harvest, were beneficial to the State's late planted soybeans. As a result, growers now forecast the overall **soybean** yield at 27 bushels per acre, up slightly from their earlier forecast but still below the five-year average. Danekas went on to say, "The State's hay producers had an excellent year with projected record yields."

COTTON YIELDS REMAIN UNCHANGED DESPITE SEPTEMBER RAINS

Tennessee cotton producers are anticipating slightly below average yields in 2000, mainly due to the hot and dry conditions of August. The year started out fairly good with growers getting the crop planted on time. Insect pressure remained in-check all year and the crop had good growing conditions throughout much of the spring and early summer. Unfortunately, hot and dry conditions during the month of August took its toll on the crop. During this time, the crop shed more than the normal amount of fruit and squares. Growers also encountered problems during the later part of September due to rain showers but damage was minimal. Most growers were aiming for only one picking this year, but harvesting problems may force some to run the pickers through the fields a second time. Despite the recent problems, the yield forecast remains at 565 pounds per acre, up substantially from last year but slightly below the five-year average. With an estimated 595,000 harvested acres, total production is forecast at 700,000 bales.

LATE SOYBEAN CROP SHOWS SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT

It was another difficult year for soybean growers in many parts of the State due to the hot and dry conditions of August. However, many areas received much needed rain showers near the end of September which should help the late planted beans fill pods. Unfortunately, the State's full season varieties benefitted very little from these showers since many had already started to shed leaves by this time. Growers have been somewhat disappointed in the early single crop yields, but hope the improved late beans will make up the difference. The average State yield went up one bushel from the September 1 forecast and currently stands at 27 bushels per acre. If realized this will lead to a total State production of 31.3 million bushels, 37 percent more than was produced last year.

CORN YIELDS HIGHLY VARIABLE

The 2000 corn crop is much better than the one produced a year ago, but many still had their share of problems. The best corn was grown in the northwest corner of the State, and in the extreme southern part of Middle Tennessee. The crop in these locations was planted early and received plenty of moisture during the critical pollination stage. It was a different story in parts of upper Middle Tennessee, where extremely dry conditions prevented the crop from reaching its full potential. The average State yield is forecast at 109 bushels, up from the previous three years and in line with the five-year average. If realized, total production of 64.3 million bushels would be the highest level in the State since 1996.

(OVER)

TOBACCO YIELDS UP IN 2000

Tobacco grown in the major producing regions of Tennessee received just enough timely rainfall this year to ensure some very good yields. Typical problems with black shank and blue mold were reported but the dry summer weather seems to have kept these diseases in-check with only the lower leaves affected in many cases. Harvest is virtually complete and growers are now in the process of preparing the crop for market. Most locations reported good curing conditions during the month of September. The fear of “sweating” did not materialize except in a small amount of dark air-cured tobacco. Burley yields are forecast at 2,100 pounds per acre, 210 pounds more than in 1999 and the best projected average since the crop of 1994. Total burley production, forecast at 94.5 million pounds, is 9 percent below last year’s level, but if realized, would be approximately 9 percent above the effective quota. The drop in production is a direct result of the 45 percent cut in the quota which led to a 10,000 acre decrease in harvested area to an estimated 45,000. Tennessee’s dark-fired tobacco yields are forecast at 2,500 pounds for Type 22, Eastern Dark-Fired and a record 3,000 pounds for Type 23, Western Dark-Fired. Type 35, Dark Air-Cured is forecast at a record 2,200 pounds per acre.

RECORD YEAR FOR TENNESSEE HAY PRODUCERS

Tennessee hay producers have had an excellent year in terms of yield and quality. Most growers were able to get two full cuttings, with many harvesting for a third time this fall. Some hay was lost in the spring due to wet weather, but the additional cuttings more than made up for the loss. The State average hay yield, excluding alfalfa, is forecast at 2.3 tons an acre. Total production is therefore forecast at 4.37 million tons. If realized, this will be a new State record for both yield and production.

CROP FORECASTS: TENNESSEE AND UNITED STATES, OCTOBER 1, 2000, WITH COMPARISONS

Crop	Unit	Harvested Acres		Yield Per Acre		Production	
		1999	Indicated 2000	1999	Indicated 2000	1999	Indicated 2000
Thousands							

¹ Production in 480-lb. net weight bales. U.S. production includes American-Pima cotton.

REMINDER: All forecasts in this report are based on conditions about October 1.